

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2220

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: FOREIGN CURRENCY REMITTANCES: THE NEW REGULATIONS

REF: 75 MOSCOW 16928

1. NEW REGULATIONS GOVERNING USE OF FOREIGN CURRENCY BY SOVIET CITIZENS WENT INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1 (REFTEL). JEWISH DISSIDENT SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE REGULATIONS HAS MEANT A SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE IN THEIR WAY OF LIFE. WHILE NO MEMBERS OF THE MOSCOW REFUSENIK COMMUNITY ARE STARVING, THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF ALL HAS GREATLY SUFFERED. OUR SOURCES SAY THAT THE EFFECTIVE PURCHASING POWER OF A REMITTANCE IN FOREIGN CURRENCY HAS BEEN REDUCED FROM 5 TO 8 TIMES IN COMPARISON WITH THE PRESVIOUS SITUATION. OUR SOURCES SAY THAT WHILE THEY STILL ACCEPT CURRENCY GIFTS FROM VISITING FOREIGNERS, THEY NO LONGER FIND IT WORTHWHILE TO ACCEPT CHECKS. THEY ADD THEY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO SPREAD THE WORD TO PEOPLE WHO IN THE PAST HAD SENT BANK TRANSFERS THAT THEY SHOULD NO LONGER BOTHER.

2. OUR SOURCES SAY THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN AWARE OF ANY CHANGES IN THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING RECEIPT OF PACKAGES FROM ABROAD. THEY NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY HAVE NOT YET HEARD OF ANY CASES IN WHICH A PACKAGE MAILED AFTER JANUARY 1 HAD BEEN RECEIVED THROUGH SOVIET CUSTOMS BY ANY MEMBER OF THE REFUSENIK COMMUNITY (THE MOST RECENTLY RE-
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CEIVED PACKAGES WERE MAILED IN MID-NOVEMBER). OUR SOURCES

FEAR A MASSIVELY INCREASED DUTY LEVIED AT THE SOVIET END
ON PACKAGES MAILED AFTER JANUARY 1.

3. WE ARE TOLD THAT THE REFUSENIK COMMUNITY SEES SOME
SLIGHT CHANGE FOR EVENTUALLY EASING REGULATIONS GOVERNING
RECEIPT OF CURRENCY AND GIFT PACKAGES. WHEREAS THE MOSCOW
REFUSENIKS HAD HITHERTO THOUGHT THAT THE CHANGES IN REGULA-
TIONS WERE DIRECTED UNIQUELY AT THEM, THEY NOW ADMIT THAT THE
APPLICATION OF THE NEW REGULATIONS ALSO SEVERLY AFFECTS
SOVIET CITIZENS IN THE BALTIC REPUBLICS, THE UKRAINE, AND
THE TRANSCAUCASUS AS WELL. THEY SAY THAT THEY HAVE HAD
SOME CONTACT WITH MEMBERS OF THOSE OTHER NATIONALITIES AND
ARE EXAMINING SERIOUSLY THE POSSIBILITY OF TRYING JOINTLY TO
MOUNT A CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST TO PRESSURE THE SOVIET
GOVERNMENT INTO RETURNING TO THE FORMER, RELATIVELY
LIBERAL SITUATION. STOESSEL

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